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ABSTRACT

Seven articles by educators with a variety of perspectives examine promising educational practices for use with children having emotional disturbances. Lee Bell offers strategies for using group activities in "All Together Now: Group Techniques for Teaching Students with Emotional Disturbances." Lyn Sarda and Rik Flynn discuss benefits and implementation guidelines for the use of circle time as an educational strategy in "We're All in This Together: Circle Time in a Special Education Classroom." The use of humor to improve attitudes and classroom atmosphere is advocated by Neal Schneider in "Healing the Wounds of Abuse with Humor." The next article, "Writing Instruction for Students with Emotional Disturbance: Is It Important?" (Catharine Reynolds) offers a variety of teaching strategies. Susan Franke describes an innovative writing project which stresses motivating students to write in "At Least One Good Reason to Write." Jamey Wolff defines, discusses, and evaluates the use of a transdisciplinary approach and describes such a program in "6 Heads are Better than 1: A Transdisciplinary Approach to Classroom Programming for the Emotionally Disturbed Child." A unique model program that combines aspects of the open classroom, team teaching, learning centers, and group-oriented behavior management strategies is described in " The Creative Learning Center: A Team Teaching Alternative for the Self-Contained Classroom" by Karen Giek and Mary Mayer. (DB)

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EDUCATING EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHILDREN—PROMISING PRACTICES

JOURNAL WITHIN A JOURNAL

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EDUCATING EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHILDREN – PROMISING PRACTICES

GUEST EDITORIAL

by Robert Michael

This issue of *Perceptions* offers the reader an opportunity to examine a variety of promising practices for use with children designated as emotionally disturbed. We have attempted to include a wide variety of practices from individuals with different viewpoints and perspectives. The articles are written by educators who have been involved with quality programs.

Dr. Lee Bell discusses the use of group activities for teaching students with emotional disturbances. Within this article the reader will find a variety of useful strategies and examples that can be easily implemented within the classroom.

Lynn Sarda and Rik Flynn develop a sound rationale for the use of circle time as an educational strategy. In addition to a discussion of the benefits of using a circle time strategy, the authors give the reader guidelines for the implementation of the technique so that it can be used easily.

Neil Schneider's article stresses the importance of using humor in the classroom. Here is a promising practice that leads to positive attitudes and a relaxed atmosphere.

Dr. Catharine Reynolds presents an overview of writing instruction for students with emotional disturbances. The author notes the importance of the writing process and includes some very important techniques to begin encouraging students to write. This article is comprised of a variety of strategies that will motivate teachers in the teaching of writing. The author also presents guidelines for the use of the techniques.

Susan Franke describes an innovative writing project that could be easily replicated. The author presents a way to help students become motivated to write. The article concludes with a valuable listing of resources for teaching writing.

Jamey Wolff defines, discusses, and evaluates the use of a transdisciplinary approach to the education of emotionally disturbed children. This model may have benefits for teachers, families, staff, and students. The author describes the integrated approach as it is implemented in her school that serves preschool and elementary age children that are designated as severely emotionally disturbed, autistic, and multiply handicapped.

Karen Giek and Mary Mayer describe a unique model program, called "The Creative Learning Center," that combines aspects of the open classroom, team teaching, learning centers, and group-oriented behavior management strategies. With advance arrangements, the authors note that visitors to their center are welcomed.

The search by educators for new ideas, strategies, and practices for use with children designated as emotionally disturbed is often a time-consuming and difficult task. Therefore, it is our hope that each reader of this issue finds a new idea that can be used in the classroom, school, or agency.

It is important to note that the authors in this issue represent a variety of positions in special education. It is through their efforts of describing their promising practices that this issue of *Perceptions* has become a reality. It is with a great deal of pride and enthusiasm that we present the following articles.

Robert Michael, Ph.D.
Guest Editor – Summer 1987

Editor's Comment: Dr. Michael is Professor of Special Education at SUNY College at New Paltz, New York. Additionally, he started the Mid-Hudson Chapter of ANYSEED in 1986.

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A Quarterly Publication of Association of New York State Educators of the Emotionally Disturbed

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ALL TOGETHER NOW: GROUP TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCES

by Lee A. Bell

Groups are a natural way to reach children of all ages, particularly during adolescence when peer culture is so important. Group techniques can be used to foster emotional development, self-esteem, interpersonal effectiveness, cooperation and increased achievement (Johnson, 1980; Johnson & Johnson, 1986). For students who exhibit characteristics of emotional disturbance such as low self-esteem, unsatisfactory interpersonal relationships, inability to control emotions and underachievement (Kauffman, 1977), group strategies can help teachers promote psycho-social and academic objectives in both self-contained and mainstream classrooms.

This article will focus on specific techniques teachers can use to help students with emotional disturbances learn through group activities and group support. This approach does not preclude other behavioral or biophysical strategies for addressing inappropriate behavior. However, once such behavior is manageable, group activities can support long-term psycho-social and academic growth for students with emotional disabilities (Rhodes & Tracy, 1972).

Dealing With Emotions

Humanistic educators assert that learning for all children will be enhanced by attending to both the cognitive and affective domains (Brown, 1973). Psycho-social and cognitive development go hand-in-hand. For children with emotional disturbances who suffer from mood swings, depression and anxiety, such learning is crucial.

One way to promote emotional self-control is to provide children with a vocabulary for expressing their feelings and a supportive context for understanding and learning how to manage their internal lives. The group provides an ideal setting for developing verbal and emotional responsiveness and for enhancing social interaction.

One group activity called Magic Circle (Bessell & Palomares, 1971) describes a process for teaching students in a group to name and explore feelings and to learn to give themselves and each other positive feedback. Typically, the teacher presents a focus topic or question to which each child in turn responds as they go around the circle. This process allows students to express themselves and to examine similarities and differences in feelings and experiences.

One fifth grade teacher who taught in a self-contained ED classroom used the Magic Circle technique to teach a vocabulary of feelings and to create a supportive group atmosphere in her classroom. Each morning, the class would begin with a Magic Circle. Initially, the teacher focused on teaching students how to listen carefully to one another and on developing a vocabulary of feelings. Students played name games where each in turn had to say their name and the names of those who had gone before them. Students learned to interview one another in pairs and then introduce their partner to the group. Once a familiar procedure and basic listening skills were established the group could focus on exploring and comparing feelings about different issues and discuss how to solve problems that arose in the class. For example, students discussed how each felt about classroom disruptions and brainstormed ways to minimize these.

Another effective activity, "One-Way Feeling Glasses" (Weinstein and Fantini, 1970) helps students understand different feelings and learn that choice is possible in monitoring emotional states. The teacher explains that we feel about and look at the world in many different ways (happy, sad, doubting, angry, fearful, etc.). In this activity students should pretend they are putting on a pair of glasses with a special lens that makes the wearer see the world in only one way. With younger students the teacher can actually bring in several pairs of glasses with different colored lenses. The teacher then asks the class to try on a pair of one-way glasses, for example, doubting glasses, and respond to the teacher and each other only in a doubting way. Then they change to angry glasses and respond to all questions and comments in an angry way. After students have tried on several different glasses, they can compare various ways of responding and how these affect one's own feelings and the feelings and behavior of others.

Over the course of the year this class was able to discuss such feelings as anger, depression, joy, and fear and generate strategies for dealing with these feelings when they arose. As students learned a common vocabulary they became able to articulate how they were feeling instead of acting out. They also could help each other name and monitor feelings and behavior.

Throughout the year they used the metaphor of one-way glasses to discuss different situations that occurred. For example, when a student entered the room in an angry and belligerent mood the class could articulate how it feels to be wearing angry glasses, how that makes others feel and what a person can do to express their feelings appropriately. When a student got frustrated with an assignment, the group could discuss this feeling and alternative ways to handle it. Students learned to verbalize their feelings and explore options for managing their behavior. They learned to be aware of and empathize with the feelings of others and to help each other and the teacher to monitor, name and control emotional outbursts in the room.

Interpersonal Relationships

Group activities can also be used to teach interpersonal skills and cooperation. Students can learn to listen to one another, to adopt diverse perspectives, to analyze behaviors that are helpful or harmful to group success and to work cooperatively (Johnson & Johnson, 1985; Schniedewind, 1987).

For example, one teacher in a self-contained seventh grade classroom consciously taught group process skills to his students at the beginning of the year and established cooperative learning groups. He began by placing students in groups and assigning a joint task, for example completing a puzzle together in a specified amount of time. Two members of each group were assigned the role of observer. As their group worked on the task, they jotted down all the behaviors (such as listening, telling group to quiet down, punching other in the arm, talking all at once, staying silent, etc.) engaged in by group members as they solved the puzzle. Next the class examined the behaviors noted by the observers and discussed which were helpful and which harmful in completing the task. Together the class developed a list of do's and don'ts for effective group work and posted these in a prominent location in the room. Students used the list to evaluate themselves and other group members and to establish goals for improvement. They made contracts with one another and developed a group reward for fulfilling the contracts. Students became invested in the success of other members of their group and provided support and encouragement to fulfill the individual contracts in order to obtain the group reward.

Failure, Frustration and Underachievement

Children with emotional disturbances frequently have an intense fear of failure, low frustration tolerance and hence tend not to fulfill their potential (Rhodes & Tracy, 1972). Their inner emotional turmoil and inability to control their own behavior often interfere with the development of basic skills and the ability to process information

accurately thus perpetuating a cycle of failure. For these students the process of learning may appear mysterious and beyond their control. Hence, they often lack self-reliance and overdepend on the teacher for constant reassurance.

Such students need to learn a mastery orientation, the ability to understand that there is a comprehensible process for learning difficult material and the confidence to persist when they encounter obstacles. Key to developing a mastery orientation is the ability to handle and learn from feedback, failure and mistakes (Dweck & Licht, 1980).

The group can be an effective context for developing a mastery orientation. Cooperative learning allows students to share the burden of failures and mistakes thus minimizing the threat. Students are also more likely to take risks in the context of a supportive goup and more likely to persist when a block is encountered. As students learn to rely on one another, they need less support from the teacher. As they learn to support one another they become more self-reliant as well (Johnson, Johnson & Skon, 1979).

One teacher in a fourth grade mainstreamed classroom used cooperative learning strategies to help students develop a mastery orientation. She presented learning tasks as mysteries and the students as detectives searching for clues to solve them. Each mistake made by a detective was rewarded because it eliminated inaccurate choices and provided feedback to the group about errors they needed to correct. In this classroom mistakes and risk-taking were applauded for their learning value.

Once students incorporated the idea of looking for clues, it could be used in a variety of ways. For example, a math group could analyze the different answers to a problem. The focus shifts from who is right or wrong to analyzing how someone arrives at a particular conclusion. What becomes important is not that someone is right or wrong but how the particular mistake was made and what can be done to correct it.

Educational Equity

Research shows that male students receive more attention from teachers than female students (Sadker & Sadker, 1982) and that boys are more likely to be identified for remediation and to receive special services than are girls (Mercer, 1973). Group techniques that foster cooperation and attention to group process make it more likely that girls will get equal attention (Shakeshaft, 1986).

An elementary teacher in a mainstream classroom noticed that most of his attention was drawn to the boys in his class, particularly to the boys who were identified as ED. He resolved to change his interaction patterns with students and to encourage the girls to be more vocal. This teacher found that when he used cooperative group activities a significant change occurred in student interactions with one another and his interactions with students. Girls and boys worked together more effectively and more equitably. Girls became more active in classroom activities and were more likely to speak up and take on leadership responsibilities in groups. The teacher was able to more easily equalize his attention to all his students, girls and boys alike.

Perspective Taking and Conflict Resolution

Group role playing provides another method for teaching students to adopt multiple perspectives in order to understand and resolve conflicts. One example from a mainstream third grade classroom involved a boy named Joey who exhibited difficulty in interpersonal relationships and controlling his own behavior. After a fight in the cafeteria, the teacher asked Joey and Alfie, the boy with whom he had been fighting, to role play the situation in class.

First, the teacher asked each boy to describe the situation from his own perspective and to articulate his feelings in the situation.

> Alfie: I was sitting there having lunch when Joey came up and showed his peanut butter sandwich in my face. That made me mad so I pushed him. Then he hit me.
>
> Joey: I gave him my sandwich so we could be friends. But he pushed me so I hit him.

Then the teacher asked the boys to switch roles and play act the situation. Afterwards, each boy discussed how it felt to adopt the opposite role.

> Joey: I didn't like him putting a sandwich in my face. He could ask me did I want it.
>
> Alfie: I wanted to be friends with him and he wasn't nice back. I guess I could be nice to him.

Finally, the boys were asked to discuss how they might handle such a situation differently in the future.

> Joey: If I want someone to be my friend I can ask him if he wants to ride my bike or something.
>
> Alfie: If Joey does something I don't like I can say "Hey, I don't like that, how come you did that" instead of shoving him.

At this point the class as a whole can enter the discussion and talk about the issues: how do you make friends with someone, how do you deal with someone who is bothering you, what are ways to avoid getting into a fight, etc. Through such discussions students help each other learn to address feelings directly, examine the consequences of certain actions and explore options for behavior.

Self-Assessment, Group Contracts and Rewards

The group can provide a supportive context in which individual students can assess their own behavior and set objectives for improvement. The group can provide helpful feedback, positive reinforcement for successes, insight into failures and motivation to achieve. If the reward is one selected by and for the group as a whole then each student is more likely to be invested in and supportive of the success of the others.

A music teacher who works with children with emotional disabilities videotaped her classroom and then involved the class in analyzing the appropriate and inappropriate behaviors of individual students. Each student made a contract to work on the specific inappropriate behaviors identified for him or her and decided upon a reward. Charts were posted where student behaviors could be tracked and the whole group was involved in helping individual members to achieve the reward. Students were able to encourage one another, remind each other during lapses and celebrate together when the goal was accomplished.

Conclusion

Group activities can provide effective ways for children with emotional disturbances to understand and overcome their problems and to grow both academically and psycho-socially. Classrooms that foster cooperation and mutual support create an environment in which these students can learn to understand their emotions and control their behavior, take risks and persist in difficult tasks, and affirm and build upon their strengths. Altogether, the class can provide the encouragement and support needed to experiment with ways of changing unsatisfying and ineffective attitudes and behaviors.

Submitted by:
Lee A. Bell, Professor of Special Education at SUNY College at New Paltz, New York.

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WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER: CIRCLE TIME IN A SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

by Lynn Sarda and Rik Flynn

From the first grade up through high school, many schoolrooms retain the straight-rows-of desks-and-teacher-in-front arrangement. Knapp (1980) finds that with this system, the students who are noticed and interacted with most sit within a central area in front of the teacher. The more peripheral the seating, the less likely the student is to be acknowledged by the teacher. This lack of equanimity can, for some students, provide a chance to disappear from the scene for a variety of reasons. This, then, can lead to a diminishment of the fullness of the group and therefore a lessening of the potential for everyone in the room to grow.

In a special education classroom, where may be gathered students with varying tolerances and needs, such a structure is not necessary and may not, in some circumstances, be beneficial. For students who are school-phobic or school-resistant, to walk into a room with precisely the same regimen from which they have fled can be quite defeating. In addressing the development of self-concept in such withdrawn or phobic students, Kay (1986) stresses the importance of allowing provisions for choice. Circle time is a way whereby those provisions can be implemented, as early as the beginning of the school day.

For the student who needs to increase flexibility and adaptive behaviors, a peripheral seat in which to hide does not serve well. Hoy (1986), in counteracting learned helplessness in learning disabled students, advocates opportunities for choice, involvement through group discussion, development of problem-solving techniques through brainstorming, and increased confidence through goal-setting activities. These activities are easily used within a circle time format.

For those students who need close, direct attention, the straight row seating is an inefficient method of providing that kind of instruction. For those students whose attention spans are short within the lecture format, imposing that format is self- and other-defeating. For those students who need to increase their repertoire of social skills, looking at the back of someone's head from the first thing in the morning on may be narrowing and hardly educational. Richmond and Blagg (1985) find that social adjustment is a central factor distinguishing children with behavior disorders from handicapped and non-handicapped peers. The authors stress the need for educational situations that provide adequate opportunity for social adjustment. Circle time is, indeed, one way to address social behaviors, actions and reactions with pertinence. With circle time, the start of the school day finds adults and students sitting in chairs together in the room in a circular or horseshoe fashion.

Circle time is a way to start the school day in a welcoming, close, personally accountable and structured manner. By gathering everyone involved in the day's schooling together at the beginning of each day, a message that "we're all in this together" is transmitted. There is an acknowledgement of and shared responsibility for the day. Each person present, teacher or student, has a place, a say, and a mutual importance. Yet it is the adult who leads the circle, helps rules and conduct be effected, and provides initial structure. There is no question who is boss, that is, who helps provide stability, structure, and safety.

The values of group discussion and dialogues are reported by Paris and Oka (1986) as a means of promoting self-regulated learning. Among these are the opportunity for the teacher to assess the levels of understanding by the students, the opportunity for the teacher to model strategies that are positive, the opportunity for students to model positive behaviors for others, the opportunity for students to gain personal power through self-motivation and management, and the opportunity for students to share their feelings and thoughts.

Circle time gives members of the group a chance to say hello to one another before they are off to the day's activities and offerings; in a special education classroom, touching bases in such a humane and defined way is surely a benefit. Circle time provides a forum in which to do teacher-directed instruction while the attention of the students has not yet been dulled or distracted by other events in the day; in a special education class it is important to grab the students while they are there. Circle time is an opportunity to go over, with the group, what lies ahead in the day; in a special education class it is critical that the teacher know if the students really understand the information presented to them. Circle time can offer a chance to sense one another's moods and capabilities on a given day; in a special education classroom, it is essential for the teacher to know these things.

The content of circle time can vary greatly, dependent upon interests and needs of the students and talents of the teacher. It may find students wading through a shoe soup in order to find their own pairs of shoes. It may find someone crying as nightmares from the previous night are told. It may find students adjusting the hands of their model clocks to a prescribed time. It may find the group looking at a map to find the names of their towns. It is a function of the adult to guide, provide, encourage and structure the activities during circle; this is to be done in a manner that acknowledges and accepts everyone present, that adjusts adult responses and demands to individual abilities and needs, that results in a setting where all are accommodated, with differing abilities adding to the richness of presentation and response.

The duration of circle time may vary as well. Often circle time at the beginning of the school year lasts a much shorter time than at the end of the year. As its richness for educational opportunity becomes apparent to the teacher and students, circle time may easily last for 45 minutes without a strain on any of the participants.

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Typical Circle Time

Students arrive at the classroom, put things away, take care of chores like lunch money, etc. and tend to personal needs (bathroom, water, etc.). Students bring chairs to circle area, as does teacher, unless chairs have been set up before students arrive. Teacher greets students . . . a hi, how are you? . . . a chance to talk. Some teachers sing a hello song to greet children.

Young Children	*Older Students*
Show and Tell, if anyone brought anything in or wants to talk of something.	Chit-chat time; maybe something's happened overnight; a time to share, explore commonalities.
Can the teacher use any of this as a springboard?	Springboard. Be flexible.
Read a story. Good way to focus attention. Introduce a song related to the story. All sing, or: Introduce a game related to concept in story. All play, or: Do a group drawing on board related to the story. All take turns drawing.	Introduce a new concept with materials; i.e. a map, artifact, photograph, abacus, food, etc. Explore material, explore concept. Talk, examine, elaborate.
Choose reading words for day related to story.	Write experience chart on new idea: what discovered, where to go from here, readings, committees, projects, etc.

Put chairs away and then proceed to individual or small group work sessions, or: Proceed to snack time.

Some guidelines may be offered to aid in setting up circle time so that it will run smoothly and engagingly.

1. Pick the place with care. You want a place with few distractions, not near the windows where the garbage truck does its fascinating pick up. And you want a place where instructional materials are easily at hand – books, a board and chalk, perhaps an electric outlet. Finally, you want a place with enough room for chairs for everyone.
2. Keep the physical size of the circle down. You want to be able to reach any and all students quickly. You want everyone to be able to see or handle objects or materials you bring in. And you want to be able to use conversational volume, rather than full-voiced lecturing or yelling.
3. Seat students strategically. You want to seat students where they'll focus best, needy youngsters nearest the adults. On occasion, mix it up!
4. Develop a protocol from the onset. You want chairs brought to circle in an orderly fashion. You want them sat in properly. You want people to listen when someone is speaking. You want people to respect one another during circle. You want to set up signals for turn taking, not necessarily clockwise around the circle and not necessarily raising hands. You want to establish rules, like putting Show and Tell items under chairs, staying seated, etc.
5. Be flexible. If your great idea seems to be bombing, then stop, go to something different. If you're moved by something from someone else in the circle, then pick it up and develop it.
6. Use variety and balance. The pace and types of activities you use depend on the group. You will want, however, to do a variety of things during circle that balance active and passive learning, that keep things moving but are interrelated.
7. Do it daily.

Circle time can be an effective way to start the school day. It begins the day in a structured, personal fashion. It provides the opportunity for students to increase their social awareness, to develop communication skills, to increase attention span, to build self-esteem, and to develop courteous behaviors in a group. Each person is visible, close, accountable. There are no peripheral seats in a circle! With its welcoming definition of the group as a group and its forum for many different content areas, circle time becomes an important part of the special education classroom schedule.

Submitted by:
Lynn Sarda from the Department of Educational studies at SUNY College at New Paltz and Rik Flynn from Ulster County BOCES.

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Getting out a journal is fun, but it's no picnic.

If we print jokes, people say we are silly;

If we don't, they say we are too serious.

If we clip things from other magazines, we are too lazy to write them ourselves;

If we don't, then they say that we are too proud of our own stuff.

If we don't print contributions, we don't appreciate true genius;

If we do print them, the page is filled with junk.

Now, very likely, someone will say that we swiped this from someone else—WE DID!

HEALING THE WOUNDS OF ABUSE WITH HUMOR

by Neal Schneider

Walking into a self-contained classroom for designated emotionally disturbed children as an unexperienced or even experienced educator can be frightening. As students of education and then professional educators, we receive training and continually attempt to improve the quality of our teaching and the productivity in our classrooms. As educators of children who may lack intrinsic motivation and may be uninspired, we are searching for those rare strategies that can effectively enhance the learning and social environments of our classrooms. Even though we learn of the necessity for an inordinate amount of structure, behavior modification techniques, point systems and rules, we need to learn how to add something as simple as humor to our classroom atmosphere, so that the emotional response of a disturbed child may be effectively enhanced. Humor in teaching can have beneficial effects and add to the learning environment (Kelley, 1983).

The emotionally disturbed child is often abused and neglected and may lack positive feelings of self-importance and self-worth. Professionals who have worked with this population of children recognize the inner turmoil these children experience. The educator has the two-fold task of attempting to heal the children's wounds while educating those very same children. Humor as an aid to educators can be an invaluable resource.

To educate these children is to successfully try to heal the scars of abuse, along with enriching the children's lives within the academic realm. If there were a diagnosis and prescription for every emotionally disturbed child that walked through a classroom door, along with love, security, warmth and safety, the use of humor would be etched in stone. For children who have often experienced failure in the classroom, humor can actually make the material they're learning interesting and enjoyable. William E. Kelley relates, "Humor, among other things, can enhance the learning atmosphere and increase the receptivity of the students. Learning doesn't have to be dull or humdrum. The value of education can be augmented by smiles and laughter" (Kelley, 1983, p. 1). During all of our educational experiences we can remember teachers who used humor to enhance our receptiveness to the material and, in essence, created a learning atmosphere that was enjoyable and memorable. Humor as a strategy for teaching motivates, entertains, stimulates, and relaxes the learner and, perhaps, the teacher.

The nature of the classroom for emotionally disturbed children can certainly be viewed as frightening. There may be children who love to tease, enjoy sitting back and getting their peers going, and get off on a good fight now and then. The educator, comfortable with responding spontaneously with humor, acting silly, or beguiling him or herself can relieve aggression, anxieties, and reduce stress that permeate the classroom. In regard to such an intense learning environment, Kelley (1983, p. 9) states "that rather than being consistently disruptive, humor may often function within the classrooms to keep crises to a minimum. Humor can prevent upsets and disruptions if properly utilized. It will not always work but it certainly is worth trying." One of my favorites when kids begin an argument is to rant and rave about how I don't have my striped referee shirt on, so I am not able to officiate their fight. I may also imitate an emcee at the fight. By walking to a corner of the room and using a voice that may be heard in arenas, I ring an imaginary bell and say "ding, ding, ding . . . after 10 rounds a split decision has occurred." I spice it up between the ding and decision part by using adjectives like explosive and exciting when describing some rounds. Once the situation is diffused through the use of humor, I or a co-worker would step in and help the children regain a focus on their work. Goals of a safe and secure learning environment are important and when crises result, humor can greatly alleviate the children's frustrations. The smiles, laughter, and look of exasperation in their faces in response to your uses of humor are the essence of the thoughts that humor can create a more relaxed atmosphere, making learning more enjoyable, and reduce tension in the classroom (Gilliland & Mauritsen, 1971).

The designated emotionally disturbed child may often be an attention-seeking individual intent on becoming noticed. Teasing, calling out, and leaving the seat are but a few behaviors in an infinitely vast repertoire. Instead of focusing on the attention of the child in a routinely negative way, what if we attempt to shift the focus of the attention to the teachers. The use of humor can again be employed in these situations successfully. An anecdote shared between adults in the room can be overheard by the children. A story of the tennis ball that hit the teacher on the head yesterday might get their attention. Continue with some 'facts' about hitting yourself with the racket and the child's repertoire of undesirable behaviors is momentarily put on hold. The unwanted behavior is not ignored. It is dealt with when the child is able to listen and respond appropriately. The tension has subsided and the teacher can then address the issue without screaming or negative remarks. The class gets a laugh and a positive feeling ensues from the simple redirecting of the classroom focus. The lack of a negative response coupled with humor fosters a positive feeling and encourages the children to respond positively.

Humor does not necessarily connote telling jokes. Humor is more a contagious attitude that implies warmth, love, and security. Talking to the inanimate objects of the classroom may get a good laugh. Any adult in a full-scale conversation with a crayon is either pretty crazy, very humorous or perhaps both. A dialogue between the animals in a poster on the wall and the teacher can get humorous as well. It is simply responding to what an animal figure might be thinking about the way you are dressed or the way you look. The other approach is having the animal figure 'tattletaling,' as the teacher responds, "Evan said THAT about my shoes." The lines are endless, and the length of dialogue varies, however, the children hopefully respond to our positive attitude and relaxed atmosphere. The results may lead to some silliness, but the tone for learning has been established with a positive attitude in a relaxed classroom environment. The use of humor also involves being funny in a response to the variety of circumstances that continually occur. When a couple of children call out at the same time, the classroom becomes a little noisy and to proceed with the lesson is a bit difficult. Instead of responding "will you please raise your hands" all the time, the children may laugh when presented with the idea that they should all call out at once. The teacher continues that a song can result out of all the calling out, or perhaps the teacher can attempt to answer the questions all at once (mumbling the answers at an advanced rate that is incomprehensible to all). The result is a simple non-threatening reminder with humor in response to the craziness that may ensue from calling out.

To employ humor is to link the pupils and the teacher through enjoyment. A group of human beings become aligned when people laugh together (Highet, 1963). Applying Highet's philosophy to a view of education, we can envision the classroom as a team or, in the more holistic educational sense, a family.

Humor may not transform a class into a self-contained Utopia, but it can translate into stimulating children's minds and nourishing their precious energy into positive attitudes. If we can make learning enjoyable, channel energies into positive thinking, and truly educate children, then we have already succeeded and healed some of their fragile wounds.

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WRITING INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE: IS IT IMPORTANT?

by Catharine J. Reynolds

Maximize academic learning time. This message is a frequent theme repeated via staff development workshops on effective teaching, minimum competency tests, state curriculum requirements, community discontent with declining normative test scores and IEP objectives. Given these constraints, teachers face the increasingly difficult task of prioritizing goals by allocating time during a finite school day to meet the numerous academic needs of their students. Additionally, teachers in classrooms for students who are emotionally disturbed expend a significant amount of class time on personal/social skill development which, if not integrated into the curriculum, can erode academic learning time.

In light of these trends, it is understandable that any proposal that teachers dedicate a significant part of their daily schedule to student writing, receives only lipservice in many classrooms. What justification is there for promoting writing with a student who reads four years below grade level, has attempted suicide, or is physically abusive? Doesn't the urgency of more critical concerns mitigate any argument for daily journal writing, poetry, or even functional writing?

Perhaps. If we see writing as an isolated skill unrelated to the general cognitive, emotional, and physical growth of a student, the jury need not be out long to sentence such a writing program to its appropriate doom. However, writing can be a vehicle for improving problem solving, academic achievement, and personal/social growth (Glatthorn, 1985; Raphael, Kirschner & Englert, 1985). Good writing skills are prerequisite to most postsecondary educational programs and the increasing number of vocations which involve information processing (Corbett, 1981). We must reevaluate the majority of instructional programs which substitute handwriting exercises, copying from the board, and short-answer worksheets for the production of coherent sentences and paragraphs. Writing requires the skills that are frequently listed on the IEP of students in the E.D. classroom: attention to task, developing organizational skills, appropriate expression of feelings, recognizing the viewpoints of others, critical thinking, giving and receiving praise, development of reading and oral language ability. Writing instruction does not add "one more thing" to the curriculum; it provides a framework for accomplishing established goals.

Teaching Writing

However, often cries of irrelevance and lack of time are smoke screens for a more honest and reasonable objection: many **teachers** don't enjoy writing. They still associate writing with hours of struggle, wastebaskets overflowing with aborted drafts, and compositions returned with "sp," "frag," and "awk" scrawled in red across their best attempts. For them instruction often consisted of searching for the grammatical or mechanical error in a string of unrelated sentences on a worksheet. Understandably, competent teachers refuse to teach writing using the same methods.

And why should they learn to write – that way? Research indicates that many of the traditional approaches to writing instruction are unsupported empirically. Formal grammar study should be delayed until eighth or ninth grade (Haley-James, 1981). Instead, students must learn to write by writing, and writing involves risk taking. Unless students feel that their initial attempts will be accepted and encouraged, they will write cautiously, if at all. The first objective is to encourage students to enjoy forming their ideas on paper. Students must develop fluency before revision is necessary or meaningful (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 1986).

Focusing the Task

Although journal writing is an effective method to develop fluency, instill confidence, and promote problem solving, other instructional foci are more effective in improving the quality of writing (Hillocks, 1986). There is no doubt that asking students to write freely about whatever interests them is more effective than teaching grammar. However, studies which have an inquiry approach are almost four times more effective than unfocused journal writing. This instructional approach involves students in analyzing a particular problem situation and developing an argument for action. Or it may ask students to state specific details which convey a personal experience vividly. The teacher's role is neither to lecture about rules of good writing nor to stand back and only react to what has been written. Instead, effective instructors structure problem-solving activities that require high levels of student involvement.

Teachers can present an unresolved situation or well-defined task which encourages problem solving. For students with severe behavior problems, specific questions regarding a difficult situation may help them to identify the emotions, attitudes, values, and interactions which have precipitated the conflict. Then alternative solutions can be identified, chosen and an implementation plan described. When student permission is obtained, journal entries might serve as a centerpiece for a roleplay or a class meeting. The writing process enables students to analyze conflicts which have already occurred. By linking journal writing to individual or group counseling approaches already in place in the classroom, both academic and social objectives are accomplished.

Using Journals

Daily or frequent journal writing is a nonthreatening introduction for students who are initially paralyzed by writer's block. By starting with a short but uninterrupted period of time during which students are required to write in a notebook, teachers can slowly increase the time allotted or journal pages required. Students who have difficulty attending to other classroom activities often become engrossed in the intensive physical and cognitive demands of writing. Teachers who take the time to respond to the students' journals by writing brief reactions to the content, are enthusiastic about the outcomes. Students often share feelings and conflicts through writing that they might not voice in front of peers. If journal entries are not graded for mechanical errors and rules are established regarding the privacy of ideas expressed, a dialogue frequently develops.

Some would argue that providing topics or ideas for writing inhibits creativity (Graves, 1983). However, a pertinent question, picture or unfinished sentence often releases temporarily submerged thoughts. Later, students will have less difficulty choosing a direction. In fact, ideas discussed in the journal are often expanded for other assignments.

Getting Started

Students can be taught strategies for brainstorming and planning. They may list words or phrases under categories using a visual framework such as a semantic map (Johnson, Pittelman & Himlich, 1986). This technique starts with a major topic in the middle of the page (e.g., buying a mountain bike) and identifies categories to be discussed on several spokes around the topic (e.g., construction, cost, intended use, options). Students can then list relevant words or

phrases around each category. This branching design provides an organizational structure for the ideas students generate which are later used when drafting. Another method is for students to write phrases or sentences on individual cards and rearrange them in chronological order as they write. Teachers should model these processes by talking through an idea for writing in front of the class first and then letting the group develop their own list, map or outline. Later, the organizers will help students direct their thoughts and include ideas that might otherwise have been forgotten.

Sharing Perspectives

Writing demands that a student consider the viewpoint of others. Researchers such as Bruffee (1984) have demonstrated that writing instruction can not occur in isolation. Writing is meant to be read – by the writer, by teachers and peers, and sometimes by another audience. Therefore, it is important that the teacher design the instructional program so that writers share their ideas, first drafts, revisions and final drafts with one another and receive positive and corrective feedback on their work. Students learn to take risks when sharing their rough draft with a peer. By giving encouraging comments about a fellow student's work and pointing out sentences that are unclear, students recognize the value of positive reinforcement and effective questioning. Similarly, they are better able to receive their peers' comments and understand another's perspective.

Crossing Curriculum Boundaries

Writing should be used in the context of the entire instructional program. Along with listening, reading, and speaking, writing is concerned with communication and, therefore, can be integrated with any content area (Smith & Dahl, 1984). Students can read or listen to good literature which deals with life experiences similar to their own. They may finish the story on their own, write a different ending, or analyze a character's feeling and actions. When reading expository pieces, students can identify the text structure (e.g., sequential, enumeration, problem/solution, description) and analyze the connecting words and organizational scheme used to produce that text. They can then attempt to write using a similar text structure (Englert & Chase, 1987). Writing for publication or performance is a highly motivating class activity.

Opportunities for integrating writing into the curriculum are unlimited. With proper preparation, classes have written and produced commercials, TV news shows, newspapers and plays. Students also enjoy writing creative word problems in math or publishing and reading a story or factual report for a younger class. They become very aware of both meaning and mechanics when writing to penpals in other schools and countries. Receiving mail from a peer they haven't met provides motivation for even the most reluctant writer.

Regardless of the type of writing teachers introduce in classes for the emotionally disturbed, a nonthreatening environment in which students' efforts are encouraged by both teachers and peers is essential. Furthermore, once confidence is built, students should be given focused tasks and teachers must model effective strategies for accomplishing them. Most importantly, writing must be integrated into the established classroom objectives so that it enhances rather than fragments the instructional program.

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AT LEAST ONE GOOD REASON TO WRITE

by Susan J. Franke

Educators have found that there is a great need for increased effort in teaching written expression. In years past, the approach to teaching writing has been to concentrate on grammar lessons and the mechanics of writing, but it has been found that in writing, the sum of the parts does not equal the whole (White, 1984). It is not effective to teach isolated grammar lessons because children simply do not assimilate them into their functional writing skills.

This does not mean that teachers should throw out all their grammar lessons. It means that these lessons should be presented as their needs arise, as indicated through a holistic evaluation of the students' writings. Holistic evaluation responds to the work as a unit, without subscores of independent skills such as capitalization, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, or the like (White, 1984). In evaluating a composition holistically, the teacher reads for the general impression or message of the author and indicates a need for remediation in those areas which interfere with the transmission of that message. Along with this process of evaluation, the teacher should use an informal assessment that involves analyzing the writing sample to identify errors and skill deficits, a diagnostic strategy recommended by many educators (Goodman, Casciato and Price, 1987; Bachor, 1979; Weiner, 1980). The results of this assessment are listings of both quantitative and qualitative error types (Goodman, et. al., 1987). The teacher should then conference with each child, and after praising the assets of his writing, explain the types of errors made and how to correct them. In this way the student can see a reason for learning each skill and, theoretically, retain and incorporate it into his repertoire of writing techniques (White, 1984).

Motivating students to use their writing skills is another problem. "Because the teacher assigned it" is probably one of the least motivating reasons to write. This is even more obvious with the emotionally disturbed population than for students in general. Getting the students to want to take pen in hand is a major challenge for the teacher of troubled children.

Population

A summer program at the campus school of McQuade Foundation, a residential treatment facility for emotionally disturbed boys in Newburgh, New York, was the setting for a writing project designed to motivate children to write and to improve the mechanics, as well as the overall effectiveness of their written expression. The forty boys involved ranged from eight to sixteen years in age and, in intellect, from low average to superior. Their emotional circumstances also covered varying degrees of severity, from extreme crisis to the transitional stages of returning to the home environment. They were grouped as homogeneously as possible according to age and ability into four classes. One teacher, one student teacher, and two aides facilitated the project.

The Project

The first phase of this writing project was to show a videotape of a typical one hour network news show, and to have the students note the various forms of writing that are used in the program. The teacher proposed that the students would be writing a campus news show to cover internal, local, national and international events. At the end of the fifth week of writing, the boys would compile their work and videotape their show for viewing by the entire population at the facility: students, faculty, staff and administrators.

The students selected the components they wished to include in their television program by consensus, through undisclosed ballot. They were asked to write down the four parts of the network newscast they felt should be incorporated into their show. The teacher tallied their replies, and they began their work. These are the segments the children opted to include:

Movie reviews	Crime
Weather report	4th of July/Statue of Liberty
Sports report	Human interest
Commercials	Public service announcement
Campus capers	Book review
Accidents	Science fiction report
Man in the street	Opinion

The topics were assigned to match those who expressed a desire to write on each, and according to the level of difficulty. For example, the younger boys wrote movie reviews and the older ones, book reviews. Keeping in mind that there must be flexibility and individualization in this project, as with any work done with a special population, not every child wrote on all of these topics.

Because the needs of the students prevented even small group instruction, assignments were presented through individual folders. The students received one-to-one instruction and remediation throughout the project. The teachers and aides circulated, giving assistance and instruction as needed. The teacher used the holistic evaluation technique and error analysis, identifying areas of weakness that interfered with the reader's ability to understand the composition. Packets were developed to cover the following areas that were found to be in need of remediation:

1. Content – Stick to the topic
2. Organization – essay structure and sequencing
3. Sentence – structure and variety
4. Language – vocabulary
5. Mechanics – capitalization, punctuation, etc.

The packets were placed in work folders and assigned according to the deficits identified in the students' writing. The sources of the materials placed in the packets included a large variety of language books. (A resource list is available at the end of this article.) The adults conferenced with individual students, pointing out the changes that would improve the paper. One technique used was to read the composition to the student exactly as it was written, without punctuation or proper word emphasis. This illustrates the need for commas, periods, question marks and so on. Before the end of the summer, several students asked the adults to read their work aloud before handing it in for grading. They discovered that they could identify errors in language more readily, too, if they heard it read by someone else. Several of the older boys were observed isolating themselves in a corner and quietly reading their own papers aloud to themselves. Throughout this process, they stopped frequently and made corrections and/or editorial changes.

Of course, the adults were sure to constantly reinforce the boys while conferencing. Written comments of praise and appreciation were put on *all* papers, especially when the grader identified a recently-learned skill that had been utilized within the essay. The teacher tried to identify only one weakness in each of a student's paper so that the pupil might concentrate on learning one concept at a time. Some of the topics lent themselves particularly well to specific skills. For example, the commercials and the descriptions of the celebration for the Statue of Liberty were ideal for increasing vocabulary, and the reports on accidents and crimes were useful in teaching appropriate sequencing. The news reports, as opposed to the review pieces, demonstrated the differences between fact and opinion and illustrated where each is appropriate.

At the end of the fourth week, the boys were asked to pick out what they felt were their best works. The fifth week was devoted to re-editing those papers and preparing them for presentation on the news show. Each boy was allowed to decide if he wanted to read his paper on camera himself, or if he preferred to have someone else read it for him.

The taping of the show took place in a room separate from the classroom. The student teacher and one aide remained with the class while the teacher and the other aide did the taping in the room across the hall. This arrangement prevented extraneous distractions and provided a degree of anticipation in the students. They became more eager to see the completed show. Two of the older boys who are greatly admired by the younger ones were selected to be co-anchormen. They added an element of self-confidence and humor to their delivery, and they demonstrated their creativity throughout the taping. They suggested they should include some humorous bantering between themselves and in introductions and reactions to the segments of the show. They also learned the importance of using transition statements. In reading before the camera, all boys were reminded to pay special attention to the punctuation marks, as if they were traffic signs and speed limits. Excitement was high during this time, but behavior remained controlled because the boys were committed to the project and each was eager to do well. No one wanted to embarrass himself. The child responsible for the one incident that delayed taping was reprimanded more by his peers than by the adults.

A behavior modification point system is used at McQuade, whereby the boys can earn four academic points and four behavior points for each class. With their points they acquire free time, television time, pool time, etc. . . . If they fail to earn a sufficient number of points, they can be denied the privilege of working to earn spending money. Because this point system affects their lives in and out of the classroom, it is very successful in encouraging cooperation.

The Results

The results of this project can be measured from the complete videotape, from informal observation of the students, their work and their behaviors, and from the pre-post test data of the Test of Written Language. The video is a thirty minute news show that delighted everyone involved in creating it, as well as the audience. Even though (and perhaps because) the finished product was not a professional job, and it had many minor errors, everyone responded enthusiastically to it. The boys accepted the good-natured teasing as well as the praise. The audience could tell that the students were enjoying themselves as they made the show, and even more as they watched it. The boys acted as hosts to the faculty and staff and, as they ushered their guests to their seats, they offered popcorn and soda to each. There were no behavior problems that resulted from the repeated viewings that were necessary so that everyone could see the tape. Most of the children expressed a desire to see it several times.

Another observation made by the teacher concerned an incident that occurred during the writing stage of the project. There was no problem in the assignment of the various topics or segments which the student had selected to include in the show, with one exception. At least one student in each of the four classes suggested that we should not write about "Campus Capers" because it might upset the boys about whom we were writing. One boy felt that others might retaliate against him, and another said, "Nobody better write about me!" Perhaps a third expressed it best when he said that he didn't want other students writing about him, so he thought he shouldn't write about them. This was a sign that some of the boys were able to predict what might cause trouble with their peers, and acted appropriately to avoid a confrontation. They showed good judgment in eliminating "Campus Capers" from their list of topics.

The Test of Written Language was administered by the teacher on the first two days of the summer school program. The students took the entire battery of four tests. The areas selected for final comparison, because of the low scores, were the *Word Usage* and *Style* tests. The *Word Usage* section tested vocabulary and the use of appropriate word forms as to tense and number. The *Style* portion tested capitalization and punctuation knowledge. The post testing was done after the five weeks of remediation as described. A comparison of the pre- and post-test scores showed that in five weeks of instruction, 70% of the students improved their score, 22% maintained their level of achievement, and 8% scored lower. Of the 70% who showed improvement, 46% increased their percentile scores more than ten points in *Word Usage* and 32% increased the *Style* score by more than ten points.

Conclusion

The results of this project show many positive gains, but the true test of a writing remediation program is the assimilation of skills and carry-over into daily writing activities. This can only be measured over a period of time that far exceeds the six week summer sessions in which this project was conducted. A future project involving high motivation and similar writing activities, conducted over an entire school year, might provide a better opportunity to compare writing samples from September to those written in June. Improving the general writing of students, especially those of this special population, requires that they understand how the various skills can make their writing more easily understood, and they must be given at least one good reason to write.

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6 HEADS ARE BETTER THAN 1: APPROACH TO CLASSROOM A TRANSDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMMING FOR THE EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHILD

by Jamey Wolff

The Children's Annex, a day school serving severely emotionally disturbed, autistic and multiply-handicapped preschool and elementary age students employs a transdisciplinary approach in all aspects of programming. The spirit of the Transdisciplinary approach as it is employed at the Children's Annex has been aptly described by Robert Theobald when he said, "People are rarely wrong. Rather each person focuses on different parts of the truth which can be pieced together to produce a larger version of reality."

Uses of a Transdisciplinary Approach

The transdisciplinary approach was originally developed by the United Cerebral Palsy Collaborative Infant Project (Hutchinson, 1974) for use in the evaluation of multiply handicapped children. Since that time its use with students with multiple disabilities has been found to be advantageous because it permits the sharing of expertise from a number of disciplines (Fisher and others, 1985) in a coordinated, efficient fashion.

A transdisciplinary approach has also been effectively used with the very young child with special needs. Hanson (1985) found statistically significant behavioral changes for young children and their parents in a transdisciplinary milieu. A number of researchers have recommended the use of the transdisciplinary format for the young handicapped child (Woodruff, 1980; Stile and Olson, 1980) because it reduces the number of professional contacts the child must endure and promotes a more trusting and consistent environment between the home and school.

Another reported use for the transdisciplinary approach is in rural settings. Blazek (1982) comments that a transdisciplinary team can help overcome the constraints of providing human services in a rural environment. Stile and Olson (1980) report that the resulting role-release reduces the number of professionals needed to render separate services. In some situations related service roles were effectively released to the parents, further strengthening the parents' ability to meet the needs of their child.

While the transdisciplinary approach has received much favorable attention in its use with the multiply handicapped, young special need students and in rural settings, additional research is needed regarding other types of programs and populations for whom a transdisciplinary approach is suited (Stile and Olson, 1980). It is the contention of this article that it can also be used with effectiveness in programming for the emotionally disturbed child.

Defining a Transdisciplinary Approach

A transdisciplinary model can be contrasted with two other approaches which tap the expertise of various disciplines in the evaluation of handicapped children. A multidisciplinary model evolved from a medical model where data is gathered by persons from various areas of expertise and reported to a single individual (Stile and Olson, 1980). An example of this model would involve the classroom teacher receiving copies of evaluations computed on a particular student from a psychiatric hospital, former tutor, and a consulting psychologist. The information is fragmented, not necessarily related and the programming decisions remain on the shoulders of the special education teacher receiving this divergent information.

In contrast, with an interdisciplinary model, the child is evaluated by team members from the same facility independently, and then followed by recommendations for programming which are made by group consensus (Stile and Olson, 1980). These professionals may only assemble once for this interdisciplinary meeting and have very little understanding of each others' roles and perspectives (Woodruff, 1980). Many hospitals and schools employ this interdisciplinary model. Again the responsibility for implementation of the recommended programs falls on the classroom teacher who in many cases has neither the support, nor authority to carry them out.

A transdisciplinary approach involves not only a team collaboration in the evaluation of the child and the design of the Individual Education Plan but guarantees coherent programming and consistent handling of the service plan by all involved, so that the educational and therapeutic impact is maintained and monitored and a developmental approach prevails (Hutchinson, 1974). In this model, team members participate jointly in the evaluation, writing of recommendations, and the ongoing monitoring of program effectiveness. The responsibility for programming success is shared by all members of the team instead of the classroom teacher alone.

Team Composition

Selection of the team members is crucial to the effectiveness of the transdisciplinary approach. Ideally, each member of the transdisciplinary team should have a mastery of the body of knowledge from his/her discipline as well as a moderate level of knowledge from other disciplines on the team and a command of a common language so that a true team process can occur (Fisher and others, 1985). The screening team for emotionally disturbed students at the Children's Annex consists of a special educator, speech and language pathologist, psychologist and social worker. The classroom team, responsible for the ongoing monitoring of a student's program, contains these members as well as a nurse, occupational therapist, administrator, classroom aides and assistants and crisis counselor. Common to both of these teams is the mutual respect for members' expertise, a lateral hierarchy in the decision making process and the ability to accept a certain level of disagreement and disparate views.

Screening Prospective Students

The screening team is the decision making body determining the appropriateness of a particular student with emotional-social needs involvement in the Children's Annex day programming. At this entry point, the parents or guardians are also teamed to make decisions concerning the child's needs. They accompany their child to the screening, interact with their child in a nondirected play setting, and share developmental information with members of the screening team. While this history is collected, the psychologist, special educator, and speech pathologist collaborate in assessing through formal and informal measures the child's current level of functioning in a testing situation and in a classroom setting with other children. After the parent and child depart, the screening team meets to discuss shared perceptions, developmental information, and make joint recommendations concerning appropriate placement and level of services. These placement decisions are made according to the services the child appears to need rather than the services that are readily accessible. The screening report contains sections written by each of

the team participants with a single set of recommendations representing the shared perspective of the entire team.

Monitoring Student Progress

The value of the transdisciplinary team's evaluation depends to a large extent on the translation of the accumulated data into day-to-day programming (Fisher and others, 1985). Effective planning for a severely emotionally disturbed child can never be accomplished in one meeting. The classroom team meets bi-weekly to discuss students' placement concerns. Reviewed through this format are scheduling concerns, program directions, parent participation, interagency involvement, mainstreaming, level of services, long- and short-term goals, and student progress. While one team member is designated as facilitator and another as notetaker, participation in the decision making process is completely democratic. Regardless of the discipline of the team member, those staff contributing the soundest ideas formulate the final outcome. Often the resulting decision is an amalgamation of many members' suggestions and opinions. This plan of action is generally more effective and broader based than one that any discipline alone could develop.

Behavioral Interventions

One important use of the transdisciplinary approach in programming for the emotionally disturbed child is with the development, implementation, and monitoring of behavioral interventions. In programs where a number of staff are involved with a single student, the need for consistency in responding to the student's appropriate and inappropriate behaviors is of utmost importance. At the Children's Annex, the classroom team identifies student behaviors which either interfere or promote classroom adjustment. After the behavior has been operationally defined by the team, the involved disciplines brainstorm appropriate responses to the behavior in question. A procedure for responding to the identified behavior reflects educational, medical, psychological, communication and family perspectives. Plans for collecting baseline information are determined. The intervention, whenever possible, positively reinforcing appropriate behavior, is then written down and shared with all members of the team including the family. Success of these behavioral plans are monitored by the team throughout the school year with modifications made if necessary.

Parent Involvement

Whenever possible, parents or cargivers of Children's Annex students are actively involved in their child's program. Involvement of the parents of the emotionally disturbed child in the transdisciplinary model may involve additional considerations when contrasted to the involvement of parents of children with other handicapping conditions. In situtations of environmental deprivation and/or where the children have been neglected or abused, basic parenting information and/or family therapy may be necessary before parents can be expected to become more active participants in their child's program. Regularly scheduled classroom visits and parent support groups have proven effective ways to involve parents in their child's program. A daily anecdotal log book passed between the family and school provides a communication tool for the caregivers and all disciplines working with the child. Over time, this "homebook" becomes a rich source of information of student progress and family events.

Staff Support

The transdisciplinary approach is an especially effective tool in reducing the symptoms of staff burnout in programs serving the emotionally disturbed student. Regular team communication develops an increased appreciation and respect for the challenges and responsibilities of each contributing discipline. The shared responsibility for the difficult decision making allows each member of the team to feel involved yet not solely responsible for the outcome. In addition, the Children's Annex classroom team is regularly used as a vehicle for staff to vent the feelings of frustration, anger, and sadness that inevitably accompany working with this challenging population as well as provide a means to share with each other the joy and satisfaction of student growth and productive family involvement. Finally, the use of the transdisciplinary format results in a commitment of participant disciplines to the team decisions. This promotes more effective and consistent programming for the emotionally disturbed student as well as increased job satisfaction for involved staff.

Conclusion

The transdisciplinary format has been used at the Children's Annex to provide more effective, better coordinated and wiser choices in the education of the emotionally disturbed child. This integrative approach may be used to involve families in their child's program and seems to reduce the stress on staff working with this challenging population.

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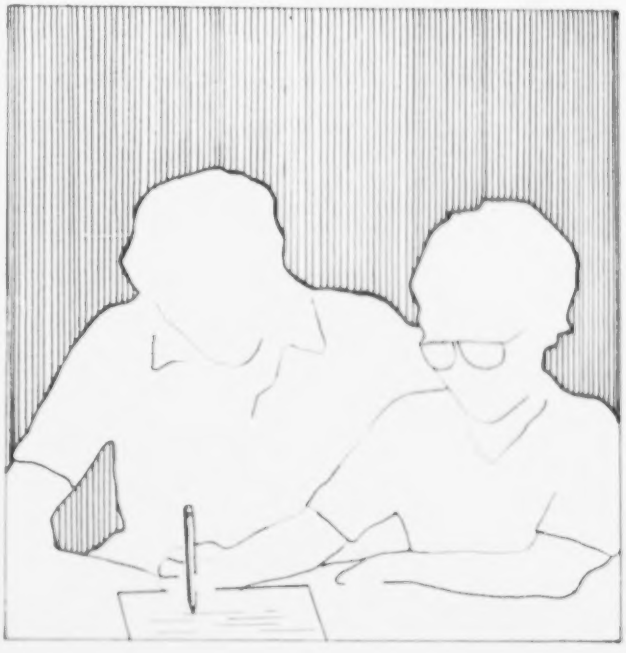

THE CREATIVE LEARNING CENTER: A TEAM TEACHING ALTERNATIVE FOR THE SELF CONTAINED CLASSROOM

by Karen A. Giek and Mary Mayer

With the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (Public Law 94-142), school systems have organized delivery systems to accommodate the varying handicapping conditions identified within the districts. One of the options for delivery of service is a self-contained classroom. Under revised regulations issued by the New York State Education Department (SED), a self-contained classroom consists of students with varying handicapping conditions grouped according to needs. These include academic or educational achievement, learning rate, levels of physical and social development, and management needs. Typically, students are generally grouped within a three-year math and reading range, as well as a three-year age range. The number of students housed within a self-contained classroom is determined by the Committee on Special Education (NY State Education Department, 1984), but must also adhere to SED regulations.

Difficulties arising from the use of a self-contained program have been identified in the literature (Kirk, 1986; Wilson & Wesson, 1986; Marsh, Price and Smith, 1983). These difficulties include: providing adequate remediation when teacher time is divided among 10–12 different problems (Kirk, 1986; Wilson & Wesson, 1986) balancing individual student data, and developing mainstream schedules (Marsh, Price and Smith, 1983). Additionally, traditional self-contained programs can limit the special education teacher's interaction with others (Apter, 1977) and create the concept of the "lonely teacher" in special education (White, 1984; Ellson, 1975).

In light of the potential problems associated with a self-contained classroom, there is a need for alternatives to the traditional self-contained classroom. The purpose of this article is to present an alternative, collaborative model program for a self-contained special education class currently in use. The model program, called "The Creative Learning Center" (C.L.C.), is a New York State approved experimental special education program located in Red Hook, New York. This unique program combines the elements of the open classroom, team teaching (Swift & Spivack, 1975), learning center approaches (Turnbull & Schultz, 1979), and group-oriented behavior management strategies (Salend, in press).

Class Demographics

The C.L.C. provides an educational program for children with learning and/or behavior problems who are not yet functioning on a level demanded in a regular classroom. Each of the students has been identified as handicapped by the Committee on Special Education. This non-categorial classroom includes students with the following handicapping conditions: (a) learning disabled, (b) emotionally disturbed, (c) health impaired, (d) multiply handicapped, (e) mentally retarded, and (f) speech impaired. The students range in chronological age from 7 to 11 years. The combining of two 1–12–1 classes (one teacher, maximum of twelve students, one teacher aide) creates an enrollment of 24 students, two teachers, and two paraprofessionals. The ratio is one adult per six students.

Classroom Design

The C.L.C. is housed in an elementary building and utilizes two standard sized classrooms with a sliding center divider which always remains open. Various work, study, and activity centers are created by grouping the furniture and several portable dividers rather than through fixed partitions. This maintains the open "Learning Center" atmosphere while still allowing the flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of the curriculum. Furnishings include small tables, individual desks, study carrels, a couch, a soft chair, and rugs. Two teacher desks are located facing each other in the center of the room. This facilitates the monitoring of student behavior and academic needs while at the same time affords the students ready access to instructional assistance from the different "work stations."

Learning Centers

The centers created in this program reflect the different skill levels of the students and utilize a variety of multisensory materials. The centers and skills listed are those incorporated in this particular program.

(a) Language: grammar, punctuation, word usage, sentence structure
(b) Writing: weekly creative story writing based on changing themes
(c) Monthly Theme: activities centered around monthly curriculum objectives, holidays, events, important dates and people
(d) Handwriting: manuscript and cursive
(e) Math: basic computational skills, word problems, time, money, measurement, and fractions
(f) Journal: daily writing themes
(g) Listening: record player, tape recorder, language master
(h) Computer: word processing, educational software, games
(i) Science: hands-on experiments and discovery
(j) Free Time: reading corner, games, crafts

Group Instruction

Students are grouped for instruction in the areas of reading, spelling, science, and social studies. The groupings are determined by individual achievement test scores. Team teaching allows grouping according to skill level and not chronological age. Thus it is possible to have the youngest and oldest student in the same instructional group. Several of the students are mainstreamed for reading, as well as computer assisted instruction. All the students are mainstreamed for special subjects which include gym, music, and art. Other areas of mainstreaming include lunch and playground.

Behavior Management

In order to promote positive reinforcement, both academically and behaviorally, specific management strategies have been chosen. The behavior management program in use is a combination of an assertive discipline plan (Canter, 1976), a token economy system (Alberto & Troutman, 1982), time-out card (Foxx & Shapiro, 1978), and peer confrontation (Bellafiore & Salend, 1983). The rules, rewards, and consequences of behavior are clearly identified and prominently displayed. To promote parental understanding and support, parents receive a copy of the plan to review, sign and return.

Students are rewarded for appropriate behavior. A token (chip) along with verbal praise is given for this behavior. Each child is provided with a "chip can" to collect the tokens. At the end of the day,

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the chips are redeemed for stickers to be placed in a sticker chart. One sticker is awarded for multiples of 10 chips. When a student receives 10 stickers he/she has earned the opportunity to pick from the prize box. While positive behavior is immediately rewarded, the student must work toward the end goal of a prize.

When inappropriate behavior occurs, a child in close proximity, who is behaving appropriately, may be rewarded in order to help "shape" the behavior of his/her neighbor. When this technique is unsuccessful, the inappropriate student may receive a "time-out" card. This signals to the student that his/her behavior is inappropriate, and no tokens can be earned. Thus, instruction continues uninterrupted, and the student remains in the instructional setting. When the student engages in appropriate behavior for a period of time, the "time-out" card is removed and reinforcement resumes.

In addition to the use of tangible reinforcers previously mentioned, other rewards include "good" phone calls or notes home, special free time, and lunch with the teacher.

Program Implementation

To promote free movement within the classroom and easy access to all learning centers, the children are not assigned a specific location or work area. Each child is provided with a tote which holds the chip can and necessary learning tools. The tote stays with the student throughout the day. A clipboard, outlining each day's assignments and mainstreaming activities, is provided for each student. When a task is completed, one of the adults checks the work and records its completion of the assignment sheet. This provides easy monitoring of student progress. It is also an excellent way for students to keep a record of their completed tasks, thereby gaining a sense of accomplishment. Those students completing their clipboard assignments are able to earn free time enrichment activities. An example of a free time activity would be an opportunity to work on the programmable robot which the class constructed.

Student Benefits

The Creative Learning Center can have many benefits for students. Children who have difficulty existing in a more traditionally structured program are no longer penalized for moving about as the centers allow for movement. Center assignments, individualized in all academic areas, increase the students' level of attained success and minimizes frustration. The opportunity for students to choose the order in which their tasks are completed helps to foster independent work skills and increases their efficiency in time management. A student benefit, not anticipated, which occurs in increasing frequency, is peer tutoring. It is common to see children helping each other in all academic areas. There is a general feeling of acceptance of each others strengths and weaknesses and a real sense of family which has been readily noticed by visitors to the C.L.C.

Academic gains, as measured on the Woodcock Johnson Individual Achievement Test, have greatly increased in all subtests, especially in General Knowledge. This growth may be attributed to the exposure to concepts beyond the students' chronological ages. The C.L.C. is reminiscent of a one room schoolhouse where advanced knowledge is assimilated through the nature of the learning environment. Presentation of material in various learning styles gives each child an optimum chance for learning.

Teacher Benefits

Teachers also benefit from the Creative Learning Center. The overall teacher-to-student ratio is increased with the presence of four adults in the room, and the individualized instructional time given to each student is also increased. The presence of two certified teachers results in a more efficient and effectively organized classroom. Different talents and strengths are brought to the program by each of the staff members. The ongoing mutual problem solving and continuous feedback between professionals improves and enhances the decision making process as well as instructional creativity. A relationship of mutual emotional support eliminates the tendency toward the "lonely teacher syndrome." When the need arises for one of the teachers to leave the room, the continuity of the program remains intact with the presence of the second teacher.

Summary

The Creative Learning Center design has mutual benefits for teachers and students. The students experience success in a program which clearly outlines and defines learner expectations. A multi-disciplinary approach to curriculum implementation is accomplished through the use of learning centers. Varied multi-sensory materials are made readily available to the students at all skill levels. The team teaching approach makes possible a continuity and depth which is not possible in "single teacher" programs. School systems, when charged with the responsibility of educating handicapped students, may wish to examine this as an alternative, model program.

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